

to immortality.” In the 20th century in the United States, no American leader has shown more reverence for history, no greater commitment to integrating its lessons, no greater reverence for the historical truth embodied in representative government than Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia.

His career was born in a time when mothers still dreamed that their children could grow up to be a Governor or a Senator or a President, when people were taught that citizenship was serious, that this was a wonderful country because, in part, we had a good system of Government capable of bringing out the best in people and solving our problems and seizing our opportunities. Senator Byrd’s whole life is a testament to the idea that public discourse and public life can be things of very high honor.

Sometimes I think one of the greatest troubles of modern life is not the problems we have, for every age and time has its problems; not the fact that we have no absolutely perfect leaders—the Scriptures said that we’ll never have any of them. But instead, the fact is that we seem so often to have lost faith in the institutions of our country and our capacity to solve our own problems. Sometimes we seem almost compulsive in our collective efforts to find the worst, even in the silver lining. And I say to you tonight, Robert Byrd’s life is a rebuke to that.

It still ought to be that we would raise our sons and daughters to believe that not only citizenship but public life is an honorable and good thing and that if this weren’t a pretty fine country, we wouldn’t be around here after 214 years—218 years—otherwise I’d get corrected

here. *[Laughter]* And I want you to think about that tonight, because too often today, I think, when the glass is half-full, we say it’s half-empty. When somebody is giving 95 percent, we focus on the 5. And when other people look at us with envy, we talk about ourselves with great cynicism, as if all is lost when much is being won every day. If this were not a truly astonishing country, faithful to its roots, its principles, the dreams, and the institutions of its Founders, Robert Byrd could not have become what he has.

There could be no better tribute in this time, on the dawn of the next century, to honor Robert Byrd than this endowment to help educate more Americans on the workings of democracy. I tell you tonight, my fellow citizens, this is not a luxury. Understanding our system, believing in it, and being willing to sacrifice to work within it to make things better for the people of this country, that is a matter of our survival. We have not been around all this time because our people sat on the sidelines and complained. We have endured and triumphed because our people threw themselves into the breach in every age and time until the work was done.

No citizen of America in our time has done this with greater zeal, greater energy, greater constancy, and greater conviction than Robert Byrd. For his long and distinguished service to our country, it is my honor to say a simple thank you, sir, we are in your debt.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. in the Independence Ballroom at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Gaston Caperton of West Virginia.

Remarks to the Executive Committee of the Summit of the Americas in Miami, Florida

July 18, 1994

Thank you so much. Senator Graham, Governor Chiles, Lieutenant Governor MacKay, all the members of the committees who have worked so hard to make this a success, I’m delighted to look out there and see so many friendly faces. I thank all the Members of Congress who are here: Congresswoman Meek and Congresswoman Brown; Congressman Deutsch

and his wife and two children went jogging with me on the beach today; Congressman Diaz-Balart; Congressman Shaw. Congressman Fасcell, we miss you in Washington. I am delighted to see so many of my friends from the Florida Legislature and from State government, and Mr. Hawkins and all the people from the county government, and all the mayors who are here.

I thank you all for working together and for working together across party lines, regional lines, governmental lines to make this a great success.

When I ran for President, I was obsessed with the idea that we had to do something to bring our country together, to face the major challenges here at home and abroad that would be barriers to our people living up to their full potential as we move toward the 21st century. And it seemed to me then, it seems to me now even more strongly, that there are three or four things that we have to do. One of them is embodied in this great meeting.

First, we had to get our economic house in order, bring the deficit down, get the economy going again at home. That's happened. We're on the verge of passing a budget which will give us 3 years of deficit reduction for the first time since Harry Truman was President and, by 1999, the smallest Federal Government since John Kennedy was President and has produced about 3.8 million new jobs. So that's the first step.

But the second thing we have to do is to train and educate our people for the 21st century. And we're working on that. Lifetime learning must become the law of the land.

The third and the fourth things we have to do, it seems to me, both relate to this summit, but especially the third one: We have to find more partners. We have to expand the frontiers of trade and investment. That's what NAFTA was about; that's what the GATT agreement is about; that surely is what the Summit of the Americas is about.

Finally, we have to find ways to continue to grow in a world of limited resources, sustainable development. We have to find it through environmental technologies. We have to find it through the information superhighway that the Vice President talks about. We have to prove in other words that the skeptics, who believe that in the 21st century technology for the first time in all of human history will reduce total economic opportunities, are dead wrong.

And if you think about the Summit of the Americas and what it means not just to Miami and Dade County in Florida but to all of the United States as we move toward the 21st century, in that context you can see the historic importance of the endeavor in which you are engaged. We have got to find a way to capitalize

on the fact that all but two nations in this hemisphere are now governed by democracy.

When we consulted with all of our friends and partners and all the other nations that will participate, there was a consensus that we ought to focus on three things: first of all, how to strengthen democracy in these nations. All of us know, as we argue and fight and struggle, that democracy, as Churchill once said, is the worst form of government in the world except for all the others. [Laughter] But it requires a lot of management. It's not an easy, clean, neat thing. And it requires a lot of infrastructure. So the first thing that our partners wanted us to discuss is how we can keep democracy alive in all these nations and how we can make it function better, what kinds of systems do they need to develop in various countries to help that. The second thing, obviously, that everybody wanted to discuss was how we can continue to integrate the Americas economically, to expand the frontiers of trade and investment and to help all the nations to grow. The third thing that they all wanted to discuss was what now has become known as sustainable development; how can we preserve the environment and promote the economy? And interestingly enough, it is not just an issue for the developing nations; it is not just an issue for Amazonia. It's an issue for the United States and Canada as we struggle to preserve the salmon population in the Pacific Northwest and still make it possible for our people to make a living up there.

So these things will be the focus of this summit, the political focus, the economic focus, the sustainable development focus. And if we do it right, if we prepare well, if we organize well, if we listen to our friends well, and if then we have a real system for following up on this, this will not only be a phenomenal thing for all of you here in this region, but 20 or 30 years from now, people will look back on it as a truly historic event for the United States. I think some evidence of that is the importance we attach to it.

I want to thank two people in particular who are here today. First of all, Congressman Esteban Torres of California doesn't represent Dade County, but he showed up today because he supports what we're trying to do, and he is a very good man. And secondly, I would like to thank my Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Henry Cisneros, who has also

come to Miami to make an important announcement later today.

The last thing I want to do is to say, if I might, a simple “Thank you, and go get ‘em,” because I am well aware that this conference cannot succeed without the kind of enthusiasm that you’ve already expressed here this morning being sustained between now and December.

I just last night had an interesting talk with the coach of the Brazilian soccer team. But one of the things he said that will leave a lasting impression on me, he said, in quite good English—once again, impressed upon me that I couldn’t speak Spanish very well, much less Portuguese—he said, “When we came to America, no one quite knew what to expect because your country was not supposed to be the home of soccer. But it’s the best World Cup we ever had.”

Now, we are the home of democracy. We are the home of expanded trade. We are the

country that, of all the great democracies of the world, has the most racial and ethnic and cultural and religious diversity. And we must make these nations feel that we are their true friend and partners and that we are going into the next century together, not just for our children but for theirs as well.

That is your mission. If you can do it, I will say again, 20 or 30 years from now, the entire United States, indeed, this entire part of the world, will look back on this event and thank you for setting us on the proper course to the future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12 p.m. in the Cypress Room at the Sheraton Bal Harbour Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Lawton Chiles and Lt. Gov. Buddy MacKay of Florida, and Dade County Commissioner Larry Hawkins.

Remarks to the National Council of La Raza in Miami July 18, 1994

Thank you so much, Secretary Cisneros, for that stirring set of remarks, for your kind and generous introduction, but more importantly, for your creative, vigorous, and effective leadership in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, a department that is now known as a source of innovation, well run, efficiently run, but also a place where values count, where ideas count, on the cutting edge of change. Henry Cisneros, whether he is trying to integrate a housing development in Vidor, Texas, or trying to give safety and security back to the children in the public housing in Chicago or donning a hard hat to try to take some buildings down and make public housing more humane all across the country, he’s the model of what we all ought to be in public service today. Let me also say, only half jokingly, he also has just demonstrated Clinton’s third law of politics, which is whenever possible be introduced by someone you’ve appointed to high office; they will brag on you every time. [Laughter]

To President Raul Yzaguirre—we were just reminiscing that he has been a leader of La Raza now for 20 years. I’m very glad you don’t

have term limits. [Laughter] He’s been a good thing for your organization. To your board chair, Audrey Alvarado; to all the Members of Congress who are here, Congressman Pastor and Congressman Esteban Torres, who came from Washington with me and represents California and all the Members of the Florida delegation who are here, Representatives Meek and Brown and Deutsch, Diaz-Balart, and Shaw; and to my good friend Senator Bob Graham and Lieutenant Governor MacKay—and I think Governor Chiles is here; I know he was here: I am delighted to be here in Florida and most especially with La Raza.

I want to say that when Henry and I were discussing what I should say today, he said I should say—let’s see if I do it—*Si, se puede*. Yes, we can. That has been the model of my Presidency, and in some ways it was the model I was raised with by my wonderful mother who never spoke a word of Spanish but understood that message. I want to especially recognize, too, the honored guests you have here for Seniors Day. They know the meaning of those words, and they have done so much for us.